

A new Lark from the French Congo.

Dr. JAMES P. CHAPIN sent the following note and description :—

In 1945 Dr. R. Malbrant, Chief Veterinarian of French Equatorial Africa, presented a very interesting collection of birds to the American Museum of Natural History. Among them were three specimens of a Lark collected in the grasslands of the French Congo near Djambala and Ossele, a region close to 2° S. lat. and 15° 20' E. long. In size and proportions they resemble *Mirafra africana* Smith, but they are far less streaked than any representative of this wide-ranging species.

The only race of *M. africana* ever reported from that region of western Africa was *M. a. occidentalis* (Hautlaub), the type of which was stated to have come from the Gaboon, although most specimens have since been obtained in south-western Angola. These are heavily streaked above, and their identification is certain, for Dr. Hartert (Bull. B. O. C. xix. 1907, p. 93) compared several with the type of *M. occidentalis*.

Suspicion next fell on the "*Mirafra fasciolata*" Sundevall reported by Rear-Admiral Lynes (Rev. Zool. Bot. Afr. xxxi. 1938, p. 73) from Petianga and Kilembe in the southern Belgian Congo and from Chisengue and Missão de Luz in Angola. I recalled them as rather plain-coloured birds, but I was quite unfamiliar then with *M. fasciolata* or *M. hewitti* (Roberts) of South Africa. Count Gyldenstolpe told me that he had examined one of Lynes's specimens and believed it allied to *M. fasciolata*, though probably of a new race. That explains how the name came to be used.

In the meantime Mr. C. M. N. White (Bull. B. O. C. lxvi. 1945, p. 14) questioned the occurrence of *Mirafra hewitti* or *M. fasciolata* in Angola or the southern Congo, because he failed to find the species in Northern Rhodesia, and felt that it might be replaced there by *M. rufocinnamomea* (Salvadori).

One of the puzzling Larks from Kilembe was given by Lynes to the Congo Museum at Tervueren, Belgium, and now has kindly been lent me by Dr. Schouteden. It clearly is not conspecific with the *M. fasciolata* group, of which I have been able to borrow seven skins from the Chicago Natural History Museum and the Museum of Comparative Zoology at Harvard College. The Kilembe specimen is a larger bird, with different colour-pattern and feet relatively much longer. In size and proportions it agrees fairly well with Dr. Malbrant's birds from the French Congo, so they doubtless are of one species. The spotting of the chest of the Kilembe specimen suggests immaturity, yet after dissection Lynes labelled it as an adult male. The plumage of its upper-parts certainly seems that of an adult.

I propose to name the French Congo Lark

***Mirafra malbranti*, sp. nov.**

Description.—Resembling *M. africana* Smith in size and proportions, though much less noticeably streaked than any known race of that species. Forehead and crown light rufous, each feather with a dark marking at its tip or a blackish shaft-streak on the longer crown-feathers. Lores whitish, supercilium pale buff, ear-coverts washed with rufous. Hind neck light brown with indistinct dusky streaking. Back, rump, and upper tail-coverts greyish brown, each feather with a median stripe of dark brown, broad and diffuse on the back, narrow on the rump. Rectrices dull grey-brown, the median pair margined with rufous toward base, outermost with outer web buffy white.

Upper wing-coverts light reddish brown, with dusky centres in middle and greater series. Most of the primaries and outer secondaries have rufous on outer webs for about two-thirds of their length, the inner webs also rufous at base; and that colour extends out obliquely along the inner margins, distal areas grey-brown. Innermost secondaries brown with dark shafts and buff borders. Under wing-coverts pale rufous.

Throat buffy white, changing to rufous buff on fore neck, chest, and flanks, with only a few scattered dots of rufous on fore neck. Middle of underparts pale buff, the longest under tail-coverts with blackish shaft-streaks.

Bill rather light brown, darkest on culmen; feet light brown.

Type.—Male, adult, Amer. Mus. Nat. Hist. no. 308,622; collected 30 km. south of Djambala, French Congo, September 29, 1942, by Dr. R. Malbrant.

Remarks.—Wing in males 92-95, tail 55-57, culmen from base 20, metatarsus 30-31, hind-claw, from top of base, 10-12.5 mm. Although at first glance this Lark seems so conspicuously different from most forms of *Mirafra africana*, I believe it will come to be regarded as one more race of that species. It has much the same dimensions, and similar hind claw, slightly curved. In general coloration of the upper parts Rear-Admiral Lynes's specimen from Kilembe in the western Kasai District is approximately intermediate between *M. malbranti* and *M. africana gomesi* White from the eastern edge of Angola. I cannot say whether the curious rounded spots on the chest of the Kilembe bird are shown by Lynes's three other examples, now in the British Museum.

It should be pointed out that the type locality of *M. a. gomesi* is only about 180 miles south-west of that of the dark-coloured *M. a. chapini*

Grant & Praed. In the whole southern Congo the Larks of this group seem closely restricted to open plains of special character, so that they have only rarely been collected. *M. a. occidentalis* occupies a fairly large area in south-western Angola, and extends northward along the dry coast at least to Lobito Bay. Whether it reaches the Congo mouth I cannot say, and no specimen I have yet seen of *M. occidentalis* shows any approach to the new *M. malbranti*.

Notes on Pipits of the *Anthus richardi* Group and a new Race of Waxbill from Northern Rhodesia.

Mr. C. M. N. WHITE sent the two following notes :—

1. The Races of *Anthus richardi* Vieillot in South and Central Africa.

I have recently examined some 200 skins of this Pipit from the area between the Cape Province and the Katanga and Nyasaland, and the present notes on the races in this area are the result of studying this material. The following races are considered recognizable.

ANTHUS RICHARDI RUFULOIDES Roberts.

Distribution.—Cape Province to Natal, Zululand, Swaziland, and Southern Portuguese East Africa, Basutoland, Transvaal, Orange Free State, Bechuanaland north to the Chobe River, South-west Africa except Ovampoland, Southern Rhodesia and Northern Rhodesia at Kalomo and Mazabuka.

In the large series of over 100 birds examined there is some variation which can be associated with geographical distribution but not sufficiently consistently to justify the naming of further races. The general aspect of the upperside is light sandy olive-brown with moderately well defined dark centres; Natal birds average darker and redder above, whilst those from the dry western Cape Province tend to be paler and more sandy above; similar pallid birds occur in the dry country of Zululand and southern Portuguese East Africa. Birds from the Transvaal on the other hand average darker above. In Bechuanaland, and particularly in South-west Africa, the populations tend to be colder and greyer on the upperside. Stresemann (Orn. Mon. 1938, pp. 149-151) uses *A. r. bocagei* Nicholson for birds from Windhuk, Quickborn and Omaruru, but in my opinion birds from these areas cannot be safely separated from the variable aggregate of *A. r. rufuloides*.

He also named from Erongo Mountain *Anthus hoeschi*. This was said to have the wing emargination of the *A. richardi* group but to be redder, less grey above, and more tawny below than Damaraland